

## **Continuing to Serve Our Nebraska Veterans**

With Veterans Day just around the corner, I would encourage everyone to pause and think about our nation's commitment to taking care of Veterans. For the past ten months I have been very fortunate to lead the Lincoln VA Regional Benefit Office. Taking care of Nebraska Veterans the way they deserve can't be done with a one size fits all solution. It will take working with other federal agencies, local government, and the private sector to address all the challenges Veterans face. We will also need to come up with new and innovative ways to serve our current Veteran population.

One way of accomplishing this mission is by hosting claims clinics throughout the state of Nebraska. Over the past year we have partnered with multiple stakeholders both public and private across the state of Nebraska to host five different claims clinics. Claims clinic allow Veterans to file claims for compensation, submit evidence, speak to a claims processor, and see a VA examiner. In some cases the Veteran received their rating decision on the same day. During the last year the Lincoln Regional Office saw over 100 Veterans at our claims clinics and paid out over \$155,000 in retroactive payment to Veterans entitled by law.

We have also continued to grow our reach to Veterans not located close to the Lincoln Regional Office. We now have benefit counselors working in the Omaha, Lincoln, and Grand Island VA Medical Centers. These counselors are helping Veterans submit claims, check the status of pending claims, signing them up for eBenefits, and answering other benefit questions. This service has grown very popular with our Veteran population. We are now partnering with the Grand Island VA Medical Center to pilot a new service called Telebenefits. Telebenefits is a program in which Veterans are provided with benefits information and assistance through the use of Video Teleconferencing (VTEL) Equipment. Veterans are able to video chat with benefit counselors and get assistance with VA benefits related questions and services. Veterans are also able to submit claims and supporting documents during the Telebenefits session. Telebenefits is now available to Grand Island area Veterans on Thursday afternoon by appointment. The phone number to schedule an appointment is (308)382-3660 ext. 2213.

I am honored to be part of an organization that serves our Nebraska Veterans every day, but there is still more work to be done. The employees here at the Lincoln Regional Office look forward to continuing to serve each and every Nebraska veteran with the same compassion, accuracy and timeliness we have for the last many years.

If you are a Veteran and have not checked to see what benefits you are entitled to, I strongly encourage you to stop into one of our many offices in the State of Nebraska or visit your local County Veterans Service Officers.

On behalf of the employees at the Lincoln Regional Office, I would like to thank all Veterans who have served and continue to serve our great Nation.

Happy Veterans Day!

Kerrie Witty

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